

Charter School Planning Phase Grant

“To fully educate a student, teachers need to do their best during the temporary time together and to care just as much about the educational experiences that the student had before coming and experiences that the student will have after leaving. To believe that the job of a classroom teacher is to operate solely in the present with his or her immediate charge, is to deny a school the opportunity to provide a cumulative purposeful effect.”

Carl Glickman

The focus and purpose of our Charter School Planning Grant will be to put all the pieces together. Good assessment, great instruction, inspiring curriculum, common goals and vision, strong community involvement and excellent collegial relationships will be the cornerstone of our efforts.

Below are the overall program goals for our Planning Grant:

- Merge the two schools, common curriculum, common instructional practices, and common assessments.
- Create a “Unity of Purpose” among all staff, students and parents.
- Develop Benchmarks for Kindergarten, first and second grade students in Reading. Benchmarks will include Letter Identification and Phonemic Awareness(Yopp Singer Phonemic Test) in Kindergarten. A running record (level 14), 100 high frequency words and a writing sample, also measured by the Six Trait Analytic Model of Assessment.
- Develop Benchmarks for third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade in Written Language. All students assessed by the Six Trait Analytic Model of Assessment.
- All classrooms and all grade levels integrate technology into their curriculum, specifically to focus on student achievement in reading and writing.
- A school based health clinic, staffed by a nurse practitioner providing a myriad of health services to our community.
- Community partnerships with local agencies and services.
- Ongoing and consistent staff development in reading, writing, mathematics, community involvement and technology.
- Extended school hours for first and second grade and extended hours for our Library.
- School based summer school in August.

Table of Contents

Proposal Abstract	Page 1
Table of Contents	Page 2
El Toyon and New Horizons A Description	Page 3
Performance Levels 1996-1997 CTBS	Page 4
Grant Goals and Objectives Leadership	Page 5
Results	Page 5
Staff Development	Page 6
Measurable Outcomes	Page 7
Resources	Page 7
Parent Involvement	Page 8
Partnerships	Page 9
Program Evaluation	Page 10
Charter Petition Approved	Page 10
Grant Funds	Page 11

I The Charter School's Educational Vision

A. Baseline Information-Demographic Characteristics

El Toyon and New Horizons are two adjacent schools in the National School District in National City, California. National City is located south of San Diego about ten miles from the Mexican border. National City, California has been identified as the 13th poorest community in the United States.

El Toyon is a third through sixth grade school and New Horizons is a preschool through second grade school. For years the schools existed side by side but were providing totally different educational programs to the students and families. There was very little communication and any communication was often negative. For the past four years, we have attempted to merge the two schools together to create one learning site for the families, staff and students that comprise our attendance area. Much has been accomplished, there is still much to do.

El Toyon currently has 575 students and New Horizons serves additional 580 students for a total of 1155 preschool-sixth grade students. 65% of the students are limited English proficient. All students receive free breakfast and lunch daily. Our population currently is comprised of the following ethnic groups:

- Hispanic-70 %
- Pacific Islander/Filipino-13%
- African-American-14%
- Caucasian-3%

The past two years has seen our attendance increase about 200 students. In addition, with class size reduction, we have added twelve new classrooms. Due to space restrictions at New Horizons, we have had to place the new primary classrooms on the El Toyon campus, creating a scattering effect of grade levels. First, second and third grade classrooms are scattered about both campuses.

Effective the 1998-1999 school year, we are reorganizing both schools. To better facilitate teaming, planning and collaboration, all kindergarten and first grade classrooms will be on the New Horizons campus. All second grade classrooms will be clustered at the El Toyon campus.

B. Baseline Information-Performance Levels of the Students.

Standardized Testing-California Test of Basic Skills-Normal Curve Equivalents

	<u>READING</u>		<u>LANGUAGE</u>		<u>MATH</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997
GRADE 2	29	35	31	37	31	37	28	35
GRADE 3	35	39	33	37	33	37	32	36
GRADE 4	30	37	31	38	37	35	32	36
GRADE 5	30	35	37	43	37	43		34
40								
GRADE 6	33	33	33	32	38	35	33	32

Standardized Testing-SABE-Normal Curve Equivalents

	<u>READING</u>		<u>MATHEMATICS</u>	
	1996	1997	1996	1997
GRADE 2(68)	38	47	21	37
GRADE 3(65)	35	42	31	34
GRADE 4(33)	29	30	31	31
GRADE 5(23)	22	27	32	27
GRADE 6(20)	23	23	26	30

The number in parenthesis indicates the number of students taking the test. In grade two, we had 68 students taking the test and by sixth grade, only 20 took the test in Spanish. Of those 20, 15 students were recent immigrants to the United States. Most of our students are transitioned to English upon completion of third grade.

We just completed testing all students in the SAT 9 and our Spanish component students in SABE. That data will be available to us about June 25, 1998.

We also have two years of data on Written Language. Fifth grade students are assessed in written language and evaluated on the Six Trait Analytic Model. A score of 4 or 5 is considered passing. In 1996, 15 El Toyon fifth grade students received a 4 or 5 on our writing proficiency test. In 1997, 30 El Toyon fifth grade students received a 4 or 5. In addition, 40 students received a 3 in 1997 compared to 18 in 1996.

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed the Six Trait Analytic Model of Assessment and Instruction. It is a comprehensive set of strategies, ideas, lessons, anchor papers and rubrics to teach children to write and evaluate their writing. The last few years, we have seen marked improvement in our students' writing and reading.

II. Grant Project Goals and Objectives

A Leadership

Authority and decision making must be shared. The staff at New Horizons and El Toyon strongly believes in site decision making and shared collaborative planning. We also believe that the we are ultimately accountable for student achievement. We believe all decisions must be made for and about children.

First, El Toyon and New Horizons have created a Leadership Team comprised of teachers at each grade level, two Reading Recovery Teachers, one librarian, principal and assistant principal and two Resource Specialist Teachers. This leadership group will meet monthly to guide the planning, learning, and other thinking activities that will ultimately plan our Charter. The guiding principle for all conversation will be how can we insure that we are

providing opportunity for the cumulative purposeful effect of schools. How can we better meet the needs of our students and families? Is there a better way?

Secondly, the School Site Councils will continue to be involved in decision making. A major effort during the planning phase will be exploring ideas on how to create more opportunities for parents to be involved in our schools. Increasing parent involvement and parent leadership will be critical to our success.

A Tangible Results

At the end of our year planning grant, we will have accomplished the following:

- A Unity of Purpose-“**Results for all students**”
- A Purposeful, Cumulative Effect of Instruction
- Accountability-Assessments and Benchmarks for all grade levels
- Consistent Instructional Strategies grades K-6
- Technology integrated throughout all classrooms
- Powerful Parent Involvement and Leadership
- Increased Community Partnerships
- Extended School Day for first and second grade students
- Extended Library hours
- School based Summer School

Staff Development

To achieve our project goals and strategies the primary vehicle will be Professional Development. New Horizons and El Toyon Staff believe the following about Staff Development:

The school, not the district, is the primary focus of improved practice and staff development.

Significant change takes time and is the result of staff development that is conducted over several years.

A school culture supportive of improved practice and professional growth is essential to successful staff development.

All educators should be involved in staff development throughout

their careers.

The principal is crucial to any effort to improve professional practice.

Selection of the improvement goals that guide staff development should involve all who have a stake in the future of the students in that school.

The development of ownership and commitment to improved practice is important to ensure participation in staff development.

Change in professional practices is difficult and requires systemic support to implement and sustain over time.

Staff development must be closely linked to supervision.

School-based staff development requires site-based decision making.

Because of the importance of on going and consistent staff development, we propose that one of our teachers be released two days a week to provide staff development in the area of Six Trait Analytic Model of Writing Assessment and Instruction. This teacher will continue in her classroom the other three days a week. Activities will include providing after school staff development, modeling lessons and observing lessons. The teacher being considered has received extensive training at the **Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory** under the guidance of Ruth Culham. She was also one of the top ten Teachers of the Year in San Diego County.

In addition, we have added a technology assistant to provide the same degree of excellent staff development in the area of integrating technology and curriculum, specifically reading and writing. Activities will include multimedia projects using PowerPoint and Hyperstudio, exploration of the internet, and of course, using the computer as a tool to create, edit, review and publish writing.

A Measurable Outcomes

Our overall goal in student achievement is to have all of our students perform at or above the 50% in reading, writing and mathematics as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test 9. The Stanford 9 will be administered to grades 2-6 each Spring as part of the California State Accountability System.

In addition El Toyon and New Horizons will assess the following:

- Kindergarten-Yopp Singer Phonemic Awareness Test, Letter Identification, concepts about print and Expressive Language.
- First Grade-Hearing Sounds and Words, 100 High Frequency Words, and a Running Record.
- Kindergarten-Sixth Grade-Writing Sample

All classrooms will assess their students in writing. The assessment will be based on a five-point rubric developed by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. Each month, students will write to a prompt and their teachers will score the papers. Instructional strategies will be designed based on the results.

Benchmarks will be established. For example, by the end of first grade, students will be reading in level 14 or above. In written language, our goal is to have all students score a 4 or a 5 on the five-point rubric. Evaluation and progress will be based on results.

Although assessment is critical to guiding instruction, it is not what will ultimately make the difference in student achievement. Jonathan Kozal said, “*You don’t fatten the cow by weighing it more often!*” We have interpreted that to mean you must also feed the cow and every now and then weigh the cow to see if the cow is getting enough quality food.

There is some concern that recent developments in assessment will camouflage or become more important than excellent instructional strategies. **The primary purpose of our planning grant will be to improve instruction and to ensure that there are excellent instructional practices in every single classroom!**

A Resources

We are asking for \$30,000 to support our planning for our Charter School Proposal. Over the next year, we will also use district, State and Title I funds to support our Charter School Proposal. Specifically, the Planning Grant will provide seed money to support our staff development efforts. A detailed description of the funding is outlined in the Budget Page.

F. Parent Involvement and Leadership

A major area of need and one where we will spend much time exploring is the area of parent involvement and leadership. During the course of the planning year, we will investigate how to increase the amount of time parents are engaged in their child’s learning at home. Researchers(Wang et al. 1993) have identified three types of parental engagement that are consistently associated with school performance:

- Actively organizing and monitoring the child’s time
- Helping with Homework
- Discussing school matters with the child

In addition, for younger children it is widely known that reading to your children is a particularly effective strategy to improve reading.

Interestingly, there is little evidence that promoting the traditional parent-school relationships have significantly contributed to school performance (Milne et. al. 1986; Ho and Willms 1996). Therefore, we intend to spend the planning year investigating some of the research and promoting with parents the importance of working with their children at home. The May issue of *Educational Leadership* focused on parental involvement. In an article by Jeremy D. Finn, a Professor of Education at State University of New York, he outlined the following as effective practices to encourage parental involvement in the home.

- Providing structure-structuring routines at home and coordinating with the school when problems arise.
- Active Involvement-monitoring the child's expenditure of time, teaching and explaining concepts, reviewing homework and providing support.

The planning year will consist of communicating with parents the importance of engaging in their child's schoolwork. Parent workshops at school and at surrounding apartment complexes will be developed and implemented. Topics will include the following:

- How to Help with Homework
- How to Read to Your Child
- Family Reading and Writing Nights
- Family Technology Nights

G. Partnerships and Networking

We have recently entered into a partnership with a neighboring apartment complex. There are 298 Units, half of them were just remodeled. The grand opening is scheduled for July 4, 1998. We can anticipate an additional 100 students if they are all rented.

We are meeting regularly with the Resident Manager to discuss ways to involve parents in the organization and decision making of El Toyon and New Horizons. During the planning year, we will continue to meet with the Resident Manger as well as their owners. The MACC(Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee) Project, a local service agency, are part owners of the apartments.

The apartment complex will house a Head Start and hopefully a preschool. El Toyon and New Horizons currently provide materials for a Homework Center. Our intention will be to fund a teacher to monitor the homework center and provide parent support in helping to organize their students activities in school. Our dream is to develop a classroom after hours in the complex. A school from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the neighborhood where students can go for additional help with their studies.

We have also entered into a partnership with Children's Hospital. The National School District is piloting a program to create Health Clinics in the elementary schools. El Toyon and New Horizons have been designated as one of the sites. Having an on site Health Clinic will be part of our Charter School Proposal.

Finally, we would like to strengthen our partnership with the neighboring Junior High School. To fully achieve a purposeful, cumulative effect of instruction, it must not end at sixth grade. During the course of the planning year, we intend to explore options to more fully coordinate instructional strategies throughout the grade levels. Initially, we are working together in the area of technology. Our sixth grade students will utilize their computers labs when the Junior High is not in session.

A Overall Program Evaluation

The success of our school will be measured ultimately by the success of our students. The following measurements will be used:

- Stanford 9-All students scoring above the 50% in reading, language and math
- First Grade-Level 14 on text reading level, mastering 100 high frequency words
- All students scoring a 4 or 5 on writing prompt

In addition to measuring student success, during the planning phase, we will develop a parent satisfaction survey, a staff satisfaction survey and perhaps most importantly, a student satisfaction survey.

A Getting the Charter Petition Approved

Much work has already been completed. All 14 elements have been shared and discussed. The leadership team, the entire staff, parents and community members and surrounding businesses are all committed to achieving our goals and objectives.

A Grant Funds

The grant funds will be used in the following ways:

- Staff Development Reading and Writing-to achieve consistency of instruction all staff must have ongoing and consistent staff development. We propose to partially fund a teacher to be on site to daily monitor instructional strategies in reading and writing for the duration of the planning phase.
- Staff Development Technology-A technology assistant will continue to provide staff development in the integration of curriculum and instruction with technology during the planning phase.
- Hire a consultant to design and implement the satisfaction surveys. Results collected, scored and distributed by the consulting firm. Satisfaction surveys to be used every two years.
- Hire a consultant to work with staff and parents to increase parent leadership and participation. Explore strategies to increase parent involvement at home with their children.

El Toyon and New Horizons will provide matching dollars to provide the necessary funds to hire the teacher and technology assistant.

At the end of the planning phase, all staff will have received the support necessary to achieve our stated goals and purpose; To Provide good assessment, great instruction and an inspiring curriculum that will be evidenced in every single classroom. The concept of a cumulative, purposeful effect is extremely powerful. Imagine a school where every classroom, every teacher is working together, supporting one another and are focused on children. El Toyon and New Horizons will be that school!